

operation of the ports as they currently are conducted.

Again, they are the largest seaports in the United States on the eastern seaboard, including New Orleans, so the potential threat to our country is not imagined, but is real. We have heightened security, as I mentioned, at the airports. We are trying to heighten security at the seaports, but I believe we will be impeded if we do not look at this transaction.

It is not a foreign entity; it is a foreign government that seeks to have controlling interest in these six ports on the eastern seaboard. We again inquired of Secretary Snow yesterday. We inquired yesterday of Ambassador Portman. I hope some answers are forthcoming as to how they strategically thought through this transaction.

But it is my fervent hope that as we continue to debate and discuss this issue that the President again will use the authority granted to him by the Congress and intercede and not allow the transaction to take place.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOOZMAN). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. WYNN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. WYNN addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GOHMERT addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. CUMMINGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. CUMMINGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE NEED FOR STRAIGHT TALK ON NATIONAL SECURITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. VAN HOLLEN) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. VAN HOLLEN. Mr. Speaker, as I talk to my constituents, Democrats, Republicans and Independents alike, there is an increasing concern that the Bush administration is not talking straight to the American people on important issues of national security.

We know that during the lead-up to the war in Iraq, the intelligence community was put under pressure to come up with a certain view of the facts. And where we put ideology over facts, instead of having the facts shape our policy, it was the other way around.

We have now learned recently from a former CIA analyst, Paul Pillar, that not only did we play with the facts with respect to whether or not there were weapons of mass destruction and whether or not there were links between al Qaeda and Saddam Hussein, but we also ignored many of the facts brought to us by some of the intelligence community with respect to the difficulties we would confront in Iraq in the case of a military invasion there.

And what happened, and he has laid this out very clearly, is the administration cherry-picked the information. They always took the rosy view of the facts as they presented us with their support of their case and tended to ignore those facts that did not support their case.

Now, whether you were for or against taking military action in Iraq, we should all be able to agree as Americans that it is important that we listen to those people who have experience, who have the professional know-how, people in our intelligence community who have spent years looking into issues around the world and in this case, issues with respect to the Middle East.

So I think it should concern all Americans that the administration decided to ignore warnings from non-partisan individuals who brought information to their attention. And it is not just the failure to take heed of that information. Now we are seeing the consequences in terms of the manpower in different intelligence agencies.

U.S. News and World Report has a story about how we are losing many of the most experienced people in the CIA as a result of the fact that they feel pressure to take a political position or that they are forced out of their positions. We are losing many of our most experienced people in the ranks of our intelligence community, and that certainly is not good for our national security.

We would have thought that after 9/11 we would have heeded some lessons, and in fact we formed a bipartisan 9/11 Commission that came out with a number of recommendations. One of their recommendations was to do more about the so-called "lose nukes," nuclear weapons in the former Soviet Union.

Unfortunately, if you look at what has been done to date, it is very little. We are not doing what we should with

respect to the Nunn-Lugar program; and that is why if you look at the most recent report by the 9/11 Commission, they have given this administration and this Congress Ds and Fs, failing grades, in a whole range of categories, making it clear that we have not learned our lessons and that we are not more prepared.

In fact, we know we are not prepared because all we have to do is look at the government's response to Hurricane Katrina and the recent reports that have come out in the last couple of days showing the total failure of initiative by the Federal Government.

You know, a lot of people talk a good game about being prepared to deal with national security threats; but the fact of the matter is when you take the lid off and look underneath as to what is actually being done, the news is not good: more people leaving our intelligence agencies, the fact that we are continuing to get failing grades from the 9/11 Commission.

And just the other day in the Government Reform Committee, we had a hearing with a number of whistleblowers, all from national security agencies. These are people who have uncovered abuses within national security agencies, from the FBI to the NSA.

And instead of welcoming these individuals who have come forward to present the administration and the public with some truths, the testimony of these individuals, all under oath, sworn under oath, is that they are actually being punished for having come forward to try and tell the truth.

Now, again, I do not care what party affiliation you may have; it is not in the security interests of this country for us to punish people who come forward and tell the truth and reveal abuses that are going on within different national security agencies. That undermines our national security. That undermines our credibility as a government.

So I would just suggest that as we listen to a lot of the rhetoric from the administration, we remember that, unfortunately, this is the gang that cannot shoot straight with the American people. And in the last couple of days we have learned that that is not just figuratively true, it is also, unfortunately, actually true.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

BALLOTS NOT BULLETS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CONAWAY). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2005, the gentlewoman from Georgia (Ms.